

Pinecrest 2022 | Sunday Morning | Dan Greene

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Preacher: Dan Greene

[0 : 00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church, knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. Say hello to make sure the mic's on.

I know those of you that have been around a long time are thinking this, so I'll just say it. You're probably thinking, man, he looks old. Just know that I'm thinking the same thing about you. I looked up peace on the internet this week, and I learned something. I learned that President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu were nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize in 2020.

They crafted a peace agreement between the state of Israel and some Arab states. And Trump called it the dawn of a new Middle East.

He's not prone to exaggeration. He called it a historic peace agreement. The problem is, they didn't include the Palestinians in the agreement.

[1 : 25] So they had a peace agreement with several Arab states that didn't like them, but they didn't make an agreement with the Palestinians who were at war with Israel.

You see, that's not peace. And by the way, there hasn't been peace in the Middle East for 3,000 years. All the way back in Jeremiah's day, he said in Jeremiah 6, 14, they are saying peace, peace, but there is no peace.

In a recent survey, thousands of men were asked what they want more than anything else in their homes. They didn't say a new recliner.

They didn't say a big screen TV. They didn't say a new computer. They said they wanted peace and tranquility in their homes.

I'll date myself with this illustration, but Los Angeles Lakers forward and NBA bad boy Ron Artest changed his name to Metta World Peace.

[2 : 42] He was first declined by the judge because he had outstanding parking tickets.

He said he changed his name to inspire and bring youth together all around the world. Seven months after he changed his name to Metta World Peace, he was suspended seven games for throwing a flagrant elbow into the head of James Harden.

I don't think many people expected him to be the answer to world peace. Or even the mascot.

God told us why in Isaiah 57, 20. He said, But the wicked are like the tossing sea, for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up refuse and mud.

There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked. All that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

[3 : 55] And when you narrow that down, it's really selfishness. And selfishness always leads to conflict. It starts early.

You take two two-year-olds and one toy and put them together. What happens? Conflict. Conflict. Jesus said that we're to be in the world, but not of the world.

We're to be in the world, but different and distinct. And how are we to be different? We've started to look at it this week. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, and now peace.

In this world where peace is a hot topic of conversation, even on the international scene, we've got Russia and Ukraine, we've got China and Brazil, and all these things going on, and everybody's nervous about it.

Everybody wants it, and it's missing. Not only on the international scene, but on the home scene and the personal scene. And in that setting, people ought to be able to look at you if you're a believer and say, I see peace.

[5 : 10] Now what does that mean? What does that look like in our life? Well, when we talk about peace, we need to understand it in three aspects.

Peace with God, peace within, and peace with others. And these three are not unique and separate.

They are actually connected. Because when you make peace with God, then you get the peace of God, and then you're able to make peace with others.

Well, let me talk first about peace with God. You may not realize it, but if you're an unbeliever here today, you are at war with God.

We all start out that way. In Romans 6.10, it says we were enemies of God. In Colossians 1.21, it says we were hostile to God.

[6 : 16] We are born into a rebellious state in relationship to God. Our choice to do our own thing is in defiance of God.

And so we have gone AWOL spiritually. Or in fact, worse, we have become traitors and defected to the other side.

You say, well, I don't feel like I'm at war with God. Well, that's because he's holding his fire. You ever seen those pictures of Israeli soldiers standing with their guns, and Palestinian youths are throwing rocks at them?

And they're, for the most part, withholding the power that they have to use those weapons.

Well, I want you to take that picture and translate it to your relationship with God, because that's really the relationship you have. You are throwing stones at God.

[7 : 27] And God is withholding, being patient with, and putting up with you. But I'll tell you this today. He will not withhold his fire forever.

Ephesians 2.3 says we were children of wrath.

We were walking around with a big bullseye on our back. And so when you think about that, you have to imagine that we were in the crosshairs of the shotgun of God's judgment.

He just hadn't pulled the trigger yet. You say, well, how do we make peace? How do we make peace with God?

Well, you can't have a peace treaty. Because a peace treaty means you're going to negotiate. And you've got nothing to negotiate with.

[8 : 33] You've got nothing to bring to the table. And so if peace is going to happen, it has to originate with God.

And it has. Colossians 1.20 says, He made peace through the blood of His cross. When Jesus hung on the cross of Calvary, He was making peace between you and God.

How did He do that? Well, the first way was He was the peace offering. He died in your place. He paid the price that you could never pay.

Going back to our analogy, and it may not be perfect, but Jesus is holding the gun aimed at you, and what He does is He hands it to the Father. And what does the Father do?

He turns the gun on His Son and pulls the trigger to pay your debt for your sin. He's the peace offering, but secondly, He's the mediator.

[9 : 56] He takes God with one hand and you with the other hand, and He brings you together. And you know why He can do that? Because those hands have the scars of Calvary.

You say, well, what do I have to do? Well, it's real simple. You have to surrender. You have to wave the white flag and say, God, I surrender to You.

You can't make a truce with God. A truce says, you stay over there and I'll stay over here. You have to surrender. And when you surrender, you accept the terms of the one you surrender to.

Sometimes in the Old Testament, when you see even countries surrender to Israel, sometimes they killed them, sometimes they made them slaves, sometimes. What does God do with us? God gives us peace.

That's why I love Romans 5.1. It says, therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[11 : 23] Second aspect of peace is peace within. Now, you can't have peace within until you have peace with God. And when we talk about peace, we're not talking about 1960s hippie peace.

When you get peace with God, then you get the peace of God. And just as we saw, with love and joy, it's God's peace.

John 14.27, Jesus said, peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. God who five times in the New Testament is called the God of peace, and Jesus who is called the Prince of Peace has given His peace to you and me.

You say, well, how can I tell if I've got peace within? Well, that's real easy.

Because what's the opposite of peace? Jesus said this in John 14.27, He said, my peace I give to you, and then right after that He says this, let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.

[12:48] The opposite of peace is a troubled heart and a fearful heart. So here's the test of peace within. You ready for this?

Peace doesn't worry. Peace doesn't sit around asking what if. Peace doesn't have that fear of the future.

Peace rests in the assurance that God is in control. Now that raises an obvious question for some of us.

Since I'm a Christian and I have peace with God and I have peace within, why am I not more peaceful? Or to put it another way, why is it that the upright get uptight?

Sometimes people get arrested for disturbing the peace. I want to suggest that you may be guilty of disturbing the peace in your own life.

[14:04] And so let me give you some ways, I think there's three of these, that you may be disturbing the peace in your own life.

The three are looking in the wrong direction, longing for the wrong solution, or living with the wrong attitude. We'll cover those three and that'll be all we'll do this morning.

Looking in the wrong direction. The world often tells us what we need to do to have peace.

There's all kinds of advertisements that present what to do to have peace. One of those is to go someplace. Go to the Bahamas, sit on a beach, drink out of a coconut, and you'll have peace.

You know, you just need to go somewhere. You need to get away from here and go to someplace and enjoy that and that's the way you get peace. Or, the world will tell you the way to get peace is to buy something.

[15:20] There are some things money can't buy. For everything else, there's American Express. If you build that house, you'll have peace. If you buy that car, you'll have peace.

If you wear those clothes, you'll have peace. Go somewhere, buy something, the other is ingest something. You just need some Valium.

Take a pill and chill. You just need to drink three or four martinis every night and you'll have peace.

The world's always saying, peace is over here.

And if you're looking in those directions, you are disturbing the peace in your life.

Listen to the words of Isaiah 26.3. God will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on him.

[16:25] See, it doesn't matter if you're in the Bahamas or the boot heel. It doesn't matter if you're in a castle or a shack.

It doesn't matter if you're in a Cadillac or a Pinto. If you want peace, you've got to look to the Lord.

You've got to trust in the Lord.

You've got to fix your mind on him. When Peter was walking on the water, he was at peace as long as he kept looking at Jesus.

When he started looking at the waves and figuring out that he couldn't walk on water, he got fearful and sank.

Corrie Ten Boom said, when I look at the world, I get distressed. When I look within, I get depressed.

[17:31] When I look at Jesus, I am at rest. Where are you looking for your peace? This may surprise you, but the reason a lot of people don't find peace is because they're looking for it.

You'll never find peace by looking for peace. You'll only find peace by looking for Jesus. John Wesley said, when I looked to Jesus, the bird of peace flew into my heart.

When I looked at the bird of peace, it flew away. Keep your eyes on Jesus. See, he understood that you have to look in the right direction.

Second way you can disturb the peace in your life is by looking for the wrong solution.

Most people think that you gain peace by subtraction. Most people think that peace is the absence of something.

[18:52] The absence of turmoil, the absence of stress, the absence of problems. Some of you are old enough to remember the Calgon commercial.

A woman is there and she's bombarded on every side with stress and by her children, her spouse, her employer, the phone. And so she turns and looks into the camera and she says, Calgon, take me away.

And you flip to a scene of her in a bathtub with bubbles all over the place. And the commentator says, lose yourself in luxury.

Well, that's the world's concept of peace. It's getting rid of all your problems. It's subtraction. What's the Hebrew word for peace?

Shalom. You know what it means? The word means wholeness. Interesting. Peace is not the absence of something that makes you less.

[20 : 03] It's the addition of something that makes you whole. Peace is not the absence of problems. Peace is the presence of Jesus in the midst of your problems.

peace. That's why Jesus said in John 16, 33, these things I have spoken to you that in me you may have peace.

In the world you have tribulation, but take courage I have overcome the world. Now what Jesus didn't say there was I'm going to take away your tribulation.

He didn't say I'm going to take away your problems. He promised that in him you would have peace right in the middle of your problems.

I learned something this week. I learned that disturbances on the sea whether they're a hurricane or violent storms never exceed further down than 25 feet from the surface.

[21 : 12] the wind of your happiness. So what do fish do when the gale winds and the crashing waves come? They go deeper.

I think that's a great principle. The way to experience peace in the turmoil of life is to go deeper in your relationship with the Lord.

The storm's still there. The hurricane's still going on. But you need to go deeper in your relationship. North Korean Christians are being persecuted under a socialist regime.

They came up with a saying. We're just like nails. The harder you hit us the deeper you drive us and the deeper you drive us the more peaceful it becomes.

See God uses even those trials even those storms to bring us closer to Him and rather than run away from them we need to go deeper. See they understood that because they are looking for the right solution.

[22 : 44] solution isn't always to take away your problems. It's to give you the peace of God in the midst of your problems. Third thing that can disturb the peace in your life is living with the wrong attitude.

Mark Twain said I'm an old man and have known a great many troubles. Most of them never happened. Can you relate to that?

How many of you here are warriors? One? Two? I'm assuming the rest of you are liars. most of us live and even accept as normal a certain level of anxiety and fear and worry.

And by the way for those of you who are warriors which I know we have a lot more of here I'm not going to get to the third point. So you don't have to worry looking at your time and going we're going to be here till midnight.

[24 : 10] No I'm just going to get through two of the points. Peace with God and peace within. You know Jesus' disciples were worry warts.

That's why Jesus asked them this question in Matthew 6 27. Which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his life span. What are you gaining by worrying?

See worrying doesn't add to your life it actually robs from your life. We often use the logic of the guy who said don't tell me that worrying doesn't work I know better the things I worry about never happen.

Listen peace and worry are mutually exclusive. You can't worry and have peace. And you can't have peace and not and you can't how did I say that?

I'm saying it wrong. You can't have peace and worry at the same time. the word worry is from a German word that means to choke or to strangle.

[25 : 35] That sounds like what happens when you're worried. Jesus even used it that way in the parable of the sower. Remember he said the worries of the world are like thorns and they grow up and choke the word.

That's what worry does. Worry chokes our faith in the promises of God. Because what we're really saying is God I don't think you can handle these problems.

I found a problem that's bigger than you God. I better take over this situation now and run the universe. Evelyn Underhill put it this way.

She said God works always in tranquility. Fuss and feverishness, anxiety, intensity, intolerance, instability, pessimism and wobble and every kind of hurry and worry. These even on the highest levels are signs of the self-made and self-acting soul. When I'm worrying I'm at work.

[26 : 54] When I'm at peace God is at work. You say well what's the antidote? What's the antidote to worry?

Well turn in your Bibles to Philippians 4. This may be a familiar passage to many of you but I want you to pull out some things here. Philippians chapter 4 and verse 6.

Be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Now many of us have memorized that verse but I want to pull some stuff out of here you may not have looked at very carefully. I want to pull out the attitude the latitude and the gratitude.

First is the attitude. Be anxious for what? Nothing. Stop worrying. That's what he's saying. Just stop.

[28 : 00] Be anxious for nothing. Which level of problem in your life warrants worry?

nothing. None. Be anxious for zero. That's what he says. That's the attitude.

Then the latitude. What are we to pray for? Everything. If a care is too small to be a prayer it's too small to be a burden.

Amen? If you don't think it's enough to bring to God then it's not enough for you to carry around and worry about. The attitude be anxious for nothing.

The latitude pray for everything. The gratitude with thanksgiving. We're to enter his gates with thanksgiving.

[29 : 01] Now what are we to be thankful for? it says here in everything. Second Thessalonians 5.18 says in everything give thanks.

So you say I guess that means that in the midst of everything I can find something to be thankful for. Let me blow your bubble here. Because Ephesians 5.20 says always giving thanks for all things.

Oh boy. Does that mean my problems? Does that mean my trials? Does that mean the pain in my life? Yeah.

being thankful for all things. So Dan that's too much to ask. How can I be thankful for all things?

Well you won't if you're looking in the wrong direction. If your prayer is give me peace then you can't be thankful.

[30 : 18] It can only be thankful if your prayer is Lord show up in the middle of this. You won't be thankful for all things if you're looking for the wrong solution.

If your prayer is take away my problem then you're not going to be thankful until he takes away your problem. But again you want him to show up in the middle of that problem.

I learned this lesson as I actually I'm a part of my position is that I oversee our benevolence fund at our church and we have a generous church.

Our benevolence fund is 1.5 million dollars. I'm a popular pastor so I monitor where that money goes and it goes not just to our church and our members and attenders but to the community as well and so I I'm overseeing that.

But I learned this lesson as a pastor that sometimes helping somebody out in a situation or removing their financial problem is not what God really wants to have happen.

[31 : 33] Because I find that sometimes I get in God's way by giving somebody rent and this kind of stuff and then God's wanting them to get to the bottom and crash so that he can show up in that situation.

I've done that. That's the difficult part of being a pastor because as a pastor you often get a hero syndrome so people come to see you with their problems and you think I'm the answer man so I often give them a prescription.

I say do one, two, and three and go home and come back in a week. And I'm sort of like the hero who fixes everything. And then I realize wait a minute God doesn't want me to fix anything.

As a pastor my job is to point people to Jesus and sometimes the difficulty in their life is the very way he's getting their attention.

And so for me to put a safety net down there is really defeating God's purpose many times in their lives. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

[32 : 46] Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Due to is full of need to.

Yes. but you can give thanks for all things if your prayer is, Lord, I want to find you in the midst of my problem.

Psalm 23 is real familiar to most people. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. When you get to verse 4, he says, even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for you are with me.

When you get time, I want you to look at that psalm because it's very interesting that that psalm starts out with David talking about God. The Lord is my shepherd.

[34 : 01] He will lead me. He will make me lie down. He, he, he. And you get to verse 4, and he says, in the valley, you are with me.

And that's interesting. He's talking about God until he gets to the valley, and now he's talking to God. Does that happen in our lives?

It's happened in my life. I'm talking about God, I'm talking about my relationship with Him, and then my life falls apart. And what do we do then?

God, I need you. I don't think I said this.

No. No. You know, sometimes when we have a prayer meeting, we have praises and prayer requests.

[35 : 08] Why do we do that? We've got the stuff we can be thankful for over here, and then we've got the stuff we can't be thankful for over here.

What are we learning? They should be combined. Because all our requests are to be with thanksgiving.

I can be thankful for the difficult situation. Because God has a purpose in it. Your prayer needs to be, Lord, use this problem to change me.

That's what James says in James 1-2. Consider it all joy when you encounter various trials. Why? Knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance, and let endurance have that perfect result that you may be perfect and complete in Christ.

I know that God is using that trial in my life to make me more like Jesus, so I can be thankful for that even on the front end. You see, every prayer is a praise because you're talking to the God of the universe, and He's in control.

[36 : 29] He is the right direction. He is the right solution. And He gives you the right attitude. And then here comes the promise in our passage, verse 7.

Notice what it says. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Now, He doesn't say, my promise is I'll take your problems away. No. You'll have the peace of God in the midst of your problems.

When your life is filled with prayer, submissive, thankful prayer, your heart will be filled with peace. It's that simple. That's the antidote. Have you noticed we have love that surpasses knowledge? We have joy that's inexpressible, and we have peace that surpasses all comprehension.

[37 : 34] That's God's promise. That's the way we fulfill Paul's exhortation in Colossians 3.15. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.

It happens through prayer. Prayer is the antidote to keeping worry out.

It's the key to keeping peace. Peter is a great example of this. When Peter was in the garden with Jesus the night before the crucifixion, Jesus asked him to pray.

Asked the other disciples to pray with him. What did Peter do? Fell asleep. The Bible says he fell asleep out of anxiety. Fast forward to Acts 12.

Peter's in prison. He's going to be killed the next morning. What's he doing? What's he doing? You guys are Bible scholars?

[38 : 33] What is he doing? He's sleeping again. But this time he's not sleeping out of anxiety. He's sleeping out of peace. And guess what's going on among the church while he's in prison?

They're praying. And now he's sleeping like a baby. Well, babies don't sleep. He's sleeping peacefully even though he understands he's going to die the next morning.

How in the world are you different? How in the world are you different?

If you have peace with God you have peace within. And that is evident to people around you. You know when your peace shows up the most clearly?

In the dark valley. I mean people can watch you going through life and they don't see the peace as clearly as when you go through a deep trial a deep valley.

[39 : 42] You lose a loved one. You lose your job. You lose something goes wrong. A trial happens in your life. And they expect you to lose it.

And instead they see peace in you. And they're going to say wow he's got something different than I've got because I couldn't have handled that that way.

Let's pray together. Father thank you for our time this weekend. Thank you that we've kind of just scratched the surface of what you want to do in our lives through your spirit producing fruit in us.

but we just thank you for the opportunity to explore these concepts of love joy and peace. And Lord I just pray that we would understand and realize that all of these things come from your hand.

And all of these things are impossible for us to even comprehend because they're so great. And Lord I pray that we would truly realize that the answer to everything we're looking for is in you.

[40 : 53] In your presence is fullness of joy. In your right hand are pleasures forever. And Father I just pray that we might be encouraged to draw near to you to stay near to you allow you to fill our lives and make us the people you have designed us to be for your glory.

And we pray that in Jesus name. Amen. Amen.